



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Heather Bond Somers and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Flax, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Frink and Councilor Somers

3. Calendar and Communications

Mayor Schmidt noted that Tour de Noank taking place Saturday at Esker Point Beach and a Police awards ceremony at Catherine Kolnaski School on Friday.

4. Approval of Minutes

2014-0178 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of May 27, 2014 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2014-0177 FYE 2014 Suspense List

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, and Cindy Small, Tax Collector were present to address the Council. Mr. Pandolfo explained that once a year, by statute, the Tax Collector creates a list of accounts she deems uncollectable. The accounts will no longer be billed, but they are still valid and will be sent to the collection agency and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0159 Resale of Town Owned Property Acquired through Tax Foreclosure

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, and Cindy Small, Tax Collector were present to address the Council. Mr. Pandolfo explained that the Town occasionally forecloses on properties due to non-payment of taxes. In accordance with the policy approved by the Council in November 2013,

the Council must now decide what to do with the properties. Staff is recommending three parcels for sale and three for retention as open space or for future sale. Councilors received a revised list reflecting corrected appraisal figures for property on Laurelwood Road.

Discussion followed on some of the properties, their locations, and the lack of development potential. Councilor Flax asked if there is any value trading the properties for other properties that may be useful to the Town for fields or a storage warehouse, for example. Town Manager Oefinger explained that these properties would not be comparable for trading. Councilor Peruzzotti asked if the cost to acquire some properties is worth it and the Tax Collector noted that some parcels are deeded directly to the Town.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the next step in the process is to refer all but the triangular parcel off Winding Hollow Road to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24. The disposition of the Winding Hollow Road parcel remains undecided at this time.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Watson, to refer six Town-owned properties as outlined in the June 3, 2014 staff referral memo from Sal Pandolfo and Cindy Small, to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0169

LaValley Property, Packer Road

Discussed

A letter was received from William LaValley, owner of 126 Packer Road, offering the vacant parcel to the Town as open space. Mr. LaValley's original intent was to build on the property, but he can no longer afford to do that. There is no Town use for the property. Deb Jones, in her capacity as the Environmental Planner, recommends acceptance of the property as open space because it is undevelopable and almost entirely within the floodplain. If the Council wants to accept the property, the acquisition must be referred to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to refer acquisition of the LaValley property at 126 Packer Road to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0170

Connecticut State Library Construction Grant

Discussed

Betty Anne Reiter, Director of Library Services, explained that Town Historian Jim Streeter has approached the Library to provide a home for his vast historical collection, which would more than double the Library's existing collection. The State Library has a construction grant program that the Library is eligible to apply for to make interior renovations and repurpose existing space to accommodate the collection. Ms. Reiter briefly reviewed her idea to relocate the computer lab. The local history room would require the proper environmental conditions for storage of the collection. The preliminary estimate for that project is \$370,000 and the state would provide 50% reimbursement. As a distressed community, Groton is also eligible to apply for maintenance costs. The Town has reviewed upcoming CIP projects as follows: In FYE 2016, the plan proposes the replacement of two rooftop units and repair of the floor surface in the video studio (\$260,000); in FYE 2017, reconstruction of the parking lot is planned (\$95,000). Finally, there is a need to replace ceiling tiles throughout the building (\$75,000). These maintenance items would bring the total budget to about \$800,000. A formal plan must be submitted to the State Library by August 29th and the Town would have to come up with matching funds within one year of the grant award in November.

The Town Manager explained that this item was brought to the Committee of the Whole instead of the Finance Committee because of the need to commit funds in the FYE 2016 budget. Time is of the essence as the Town does not want to wait until the space is completed to begin going through Mr. Streeter's collection. The Town Manager feels this is a tremendous opportunity for the community, which currently has no central depository for Groton history.

Councilor Watson expressed his support, as did Councilor Peruzzotti, noting a cost savings of \$200,000 if the projects are done together. In response to Councilor Moravsik, Ms. Reiter stated that she feels the Town is in a good position to receive the grant. Councilor Flax stated this is a great opportunity, but he is wary of the cost. He suggested that the Town could store the collection until it can be displayed. Councilor Flax cannot support the \$400,000 investment without additional grants. Mayor Schmidt expressed her support for the project.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Ms. Reiter noted that much of the collection will be digitized and available on line as part of this project. In response to Councilor Flax, the Town Manager explained that if the matching grant funding is not secured, the Town will not be in a position to accept the grant. Moravsik questioned the elevation of the portion of the building where these items will be stored.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0135 Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction - Update

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Town Manager Oefinger noted the Council's recent site walk. The Public Works Department will be going out to do some selective minor repair work, which will be coordinated with the sub base. Staff met with the Department of Transportation on June 3rd to review construction plans and there is a follow-up meeting on June 16th. There will be a public information meeting on June 18th and adjacent property owners specifically have been invited to attend.

Councilor Frink arrived at 6:54 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Somers

2014-0164 Police Chief Recruitment

Discussed

Councilors received the Police Chief job description, which was approved by the Council in March 2007. Town Manager Oefinger has had discussions with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association (CPCA). Although CPCA's services are free, the Town needs to enter into an agreement, a copy of which was distributed to Councilors. CPCA will categorize candidates and they ask that the Town not appoint someone that they do not feel is qualified. The Town Manager is seeking authorization to sign the agreement. The Town would like to advertise the position in the next week, but CPCA has already indicated that summer may pose a scheduling problem.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Frink, to authorize the Town Manager to sign an agreement with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association.

Town Manager Oefinger reviewed a possible time line. Councilor Frink stated that he has researched police chief hiring and many towns have used a panel of some kind. He also discovered that the process is not without glitches. Councilor Flax feels this is a hiring process like any other and using CPCA is good. Councilor Peruzzotti expressed support for using different panels during the process. The Town contact will be the Town Manager.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0004 Pending Litigation (2014 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, go into executive session at 7:06 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200(6)(B) for the purpose of discussing a pending claim and/or pending litigation by and/or on behalf of a police officer concerning alleged contract violations and/or discriminatory conduct.

Councilor Watson asked how Councilor Cerf will be informed about what happens in executive session.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that Councilor Cerf specifically asked that this item and the next item be put on the agenda. The agenda was finalized before Councilor Cerf notified the Town Manager that she would be out of town. Councilor Cerf can meet individually with the Town Attorney for an update if she so desires.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 7:46 p.m.

2014-0173

Report on Town Attorney Caseload

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, go into executive session at 7:48 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200(6)(B) and/or (E) for the purpose of discussing matters currently being addressed by the Town Attorney, including pending claims, pending litigation and/or attorney client privileged information.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

The executive session ended at 8:17 p.m.

2013-0156

Town Manager Annual Evaluation (2013)

Not Discussed

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Recommended for Deletion:

2013-0232 **FYE 2015 Budget**

Not Discussed

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.